

## 6. Initial Assessment

### 6.1 Initial Assessment Requirements

The initial assessment is the basis for selecting a specific foster care permanency goal and successful service planning. Completion of the Permanency Planning Indicator during the initial assessment may also support the selection of a concurrent goal.

The initial assessment shall:

- Be entered into SACWIS within 30 days of acceptance of the child for placement and completed within 60 days of placement.
- Be entered into SACWIS, using the SACWIS assessment screen and completing all the required elements of the appropriate SACWIS screens. The SACWIS Assessment screens may be printed, signed and placed in the paper case record, if desired.
- Be based on the Child Protective Services Safety Assessment completed when the child was removed from the home. The completed Child Protective Services Safety Assessment must be copied and pasted into the appropriate element of the SACWIS assessment screen. Safety factors taken into consideration include those that led to the transfer of the child's custody or placement to the department such as:
  - Factors influencing the child's vulnerability (conditions that result in the child's inability to protect self)

Whether the caretaker has:

- Caused serious harm to the child or threatened to cause harm;
- Previously maltreated a child in his/her care;
- Has failed to protect or provide the necessary supervision to protect the child from serious harm;
- Explained any injury to the child in such a way that is questionable or inconsistent with the nature of the injury;
- Refused access to the child by local department workers;
- Failed to meet the child's need for food, clothing shelter and/or medical and/or mental health care; and
- The child's physical living conditions are hazardous and threatening to the child.

Additional caretaker factors include:

- Caretakers substance use is seriously affecting their ability to supervise, protect or care for the child;
- Caretakers behavior toward the child is violent or out-of-control;

- The caretaker describes or acts towards the child in predominately negative terms;
- Child sexual abuse is suspected;
- Caretakers physical, intellectual or mental health seriously affects their ability to supervise, protect or care for the child.
- The child is fearful of the caretaker;

In addition to basing the initial assessment on the Child Protective Services Safety Assessment, all children entering care and the family members to whom they are to be reunited must be assessed based on consideration of at least the following factors:

- Background history about the child including but not limited to:
  - Emotional/behavioral functioning;
  - Family relationships;
  - Medical/physical functioning and needs;
  - Child development milestones;
  - Cultural/Community Identity;
  - Substance abuse;
  - Educational achievement and difficulties;
  - Peer/adult social relationships including the child's relationship to previous caretakers or other adults with whom the child might live;
  - Delinquent/CHINS behavior
- Background history about the child's family and/or previous custodians including but not limited to:
  - Substance use or abuse
  - Emotional stability;
  - Sexual abuse;
  - Resource management and basic needs;
  - Parenting skills;
  - Household relationships/domestic violence;
  - Caretaker abuse or neglect history;
  - Social or community support system;
  - Physical health; and
  - Communication skills.

When a child is referred to the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT), the FAPT assessment may substitute for all of the initial foster care assessment as long as the requirements for the initial foster care assessment are met.

In addition, children receiving CSA funded maintenance and services must undergo a uniform assessment to assess behavior and functioning. For children, ages 7 and above, the child and adolescent functional assessment scale (CAFAS) will be used. For children, ages 4-7, the preschool and early childhood assessment (PECFAS) will be used to assess the child. The requirement for a

uniform assessment does not apply to Title IV-E children who do not receive services from CSA.

(See Appendix C for Casework Procedures and Core Practice Issues on Initial Assessment)